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UNCLAS RANGOON 000368

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV
BANGKOK FOR USAID, FAS
USPACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: EAID PGOV BM
SUBJECT: INDONESIAN QUAKE A NO-SHOW IN BURMA

¶1. Summary: The March 28 earthquake off Indonesia apparently has had no impact on Burma. Embassy efforts to contact coastal resorts failed, but there is no evidence that Amcits were in any danger. GOB officials were unaware of the quake last night until alerted by embassy officers. Local diplomats told us they too were awakened by their headquarters and attempted to contact the GOB to no avail. UN agencies have checked in with officers in areas hard hit by the December tsunami and found no damage in those regions. We see no reason to doubt the UN assessment. End summary.

UN: No Damage

¶2. According to a senior UNDP official in Rangoon, the earthquake has had no impact on Burma so far as the UN knows. The UNDP project office in the Irrawaddy delta, the hardest hit area from the December 26th tsunami, reported in that there was no damage from the latest quake -- though waves were a bit higher than normal. UNDP said there was no overnight action taken by the UN Country Team. She said she learned about the quake only on the morning of the 29th and had not consulted with the GOB on potential impact in other areas besides the delta. A World Food Program regional assessment of the March 28 earthquake concurred with UNDP's conclusion.

GOB: No Idea

¶3. This assessment is apparently shared by the GOB. Following Ops Center notification of Embassy Rangoon in the early hours of March 29th, DAO contacted the Foreign Liaison Officer at the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and Conoff phoned MOFA to pass on the news. Both MOFA and MOD were grateful for the information, as they had not yet heard. Both said they would immediately brief superiors regarding the situation. We have not received any information from MOFA or MOD regarding GOB reaction to the earthquake or potential damage to Burmese coastal areas.

Amcits: Calls to Beach Resorts, But No Warden Message

¶4. Upon notification by the Ops Center, DCM and Conoff attempted for three hours, without success, to reach resort hotels in the Bay of Bengal area (these remote resorts often do not have functioning telephone service). While continuing these attempts, COM and Conoff decided not to activate the warden system telephone tree as by that time there was no sign from press reportage that there was a tsunami, and no registered Americans reside in the coastal areas likely to be hit by one.

Foreign Diplomats: No News

¶5. We have heard no further information from foreign diplomats stationed in Rangoon. However, diplomats from China, Vietnam, Laos, South Korea, Russia, and Thailand told us they too had been awakened by their headquarters in case the quake caused damage in Burma, but that they had no reason to doubt the assessment by the UNDP.
Martinez